

REPORT
of the
CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE
for the
XCEL ENERGY
PROPOSED
161 KV HIGH VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION LINE
between the
LAKEFIELD JUNCTION AND FOX LAKE SUBSTATIONS
in the
COUNTIES OF JACKSON AND MARTIN
ALTERNATIVE PERMITTING PROCESS
EQB DOCKET NO. 03-64-TR-XCEL
SUBMITTED:
February 26, 2004

Introduction

Prior to the filing of Xcel Energy's application for a route permit for the proposed 161 kV transmission line, the chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board appointed a Citizen Advisory Task Force (CATF) and charged the Task Force to assist the Board in reviewing the application and to make recommendations regarding identification of additional routes and particular impacts to be evaluated in the environmental review process. The Task Force was also directed to express a preference for a specific route if it has one and to complete its review and report to the Board no later than 60 days after the date of acceptance of a completed application.

The EQB accepted Xcel Energy's application on December 12, 2003. The Task Force has complied with the charge given and completed its work on February 4, 2004. This report and recommendations are submitted to the EQB for its consideration.

Project Description

Northern States Power Company, d/b/a Xcel Energy, is proposing a new, approximately 25.5 mile 161 kV transmission line. The proposed line and the associated structures, electrical equipment, and appurtenances will connect to the Lakefield Junction Substation in Jackson County, Minnesota, and the Fox lake Substation in Martin County, Minnesota. Between Lakefield Junction and the City of Jackson, Xcel is considering use of a double circuit 161/ 69 kV transmission line structure to support a future 69 kV transmission line being considered by other energy suppliers to deliver electrical energy to the City of Jackson. Other options exist to meet this need, but no decision has been made at this time. A 69 kV line is not subject to EQB jurisdiction.

Structures: Xcel is proposing to use single pole, galvanized steel, and davit arm structures for the Project. The single circuit structures will range from 70 to 110 feet in height, with an average height of 80 feet and an average span length between each structure of 600 feet. The double circuit structures, if necessary, will range from 75 to 115 feet in height, with an average of 95 feet and have an average span between structures of 400 to 600 feet.

Right-of-Way: The majority of Xcel's proposed route would follow existing transmission line and Interstate 90 road right-of-way (ROW). New ROW would be required along the two-mile corridor running south of the Lakefield Junction Substation to I-90 and along spans going through the Jackson area and going north to the Fox Lake Substation from I-90. Where the ROW parallels Interstate 90, the required ROW width would be 45 feet. When the line does not parallel or utilize existing ROW, the ROW width will be 80 feet.

The need for this line was established by the Public Utilities Commission in its March 11, 2003, *Order Granting Certificates of Need Subject to Conditions* (PUC Docket No. E-002/CN-01-1958).

Citizen Advisory Task Force and Charge

The voluntary Task Force of 13 members and 3 alternates was appointed by EQB Chair Robert A. Schroeder on July 17, 2003. Chair Schroeder further issued a charge to the Task Force, directing it in a manner which would assist the Board. See Appendix A. (CATF Decision and Scope of Participation). A Task Force member list is provided as Appendix B.

Members on the Task Force represented the Southwest Regional Development Commission (Region 8), Region Nine Development Commission, Martin County, Jackson County, City of Jackson, City of Sherburn, Jay Township, Des Moines Township, and landowners in the area of the Xcel proposed route.

The Task Force meetings were held at the Jackson City Hall. The meetings were open to the public, with public notice provided in local newspapers and by mailing. Notice of the Task Force meeting schedule was also announced to persons attending the EQB public information and scoping meeting on December 15, 2003, at the Country Manor Inn. The Task Force meetings always provided an opportunity for participation by interested persons.

The Task Force met three times (August 27, September 10 and 24) prior to submittal and acceptance of Xcel's application by the EQB. These meetings covered a variety of background tasks and established ground rules for Task Force activities. After Xcel's application for the route permit was accepted by the EQB chair (December 12, 2003), the Task Force met on January 7, 14, 21 and February 4 to complete its charge.

At its last four meetings the Task Force spent its time reviewing routing options and the draft scoping document prepared by the EQB staff. See Appendix C. Extensive discussions were held on routing options through the City of Jackson, in the Sherburn area, and the Lakefield Junction Substation area, and on other routing options (crossover points) along Interstate 90. On January 21st a number of the Task Force members, representatives from Xcel, EQB staff and other interested persons met in the field to inspect and evaluate proposed alternative routes through the City of Jackson, prior to the Task Force meeting that evening. Task Force members also did field work on their own.

As a part its charge, the Task Force was to identify particular impacts and additional routes to be evaluated in the environmental review process. The following two sections identify the Task Force recommendations on impacts and routing alternatives.

I. Environmental Issues Identified for Scoping

The Task Force has had the opportunity to review Xcel's route permit application and a preliminary draft scoping decision document prepared by EQB staff for discussion purposes (see Appendix C) and to listen to comments offered by the public at the Task Force meetings.

Based on this review the Task Force identifies the following environmental issues for scoping:

A. General Transmission Line Impacts to be Evaluated

No additional suggestions for this category.

B. Route Selection

B.2 The Task Force recommends that the EA identify more specifically the impacts associated with routing options: a) near the Lakefield Junction Substation area; b) through the City of Jackson; c) near Sherburn; d) and along I-90 where homes and farms are present.

C. Biological Resources

No additional suggestions in this category

D. Cultural Resources

The Task Force recommends that the EA include a discussion on the development and expansion plans of Fort Belmont.

E. Geology and Soils

No additional suggestions in this category

F. Health and Safety

No additional suggestions in this category

G. Land

The Task Force recommends that the EA discuss transmission line setbacks and clearances for residential areas and, highways and with regard to expansion plans for the Jackson airport.

H. Noise

No additional suggestions in this category

I. Visual Impacts and Aesthetics

No additional suggestions in this category

J. Socioeconomics

The Task Force recommends the EA examine socioeconomics in more detail than what was provided in the application for all routing options authorized by the EQB chair.

II. Routing Alternatives

The Task Force spent a considerable amount of time reviewing and discussing route alternatives based on the members' knowledge of the area, while considering the factors identified in Minnesota Rules, part 4400.3150. The Task Force has examined and evaluated the following route and route alternative:

Xcel's route as proposed in its route permit application (See Appendix D)

The Task Force has reviewed Xcel's proposed route and generally is supportive of using existing rights-of-way, such as I-90, rather than creating a new separate right-of-way for the proposed line. However, a number of planned land use changes in the City of Jackson were not known to Xcel when its application was prepared. These changes include but are not limited to height restrictions for the proposed expansion of the Jackson airport, additional industrial park plans, expansion of Fort Belmont west of Highway 71, and the proposed development plans between Highway 71 and Fort Belmont that include a proposed motel, residential homes and additional commercial development.

Based upon the routing constraints identified above, the Task Force does not support Xcel's choice of its proposed route through the City of Jackson (See Appendix D). Outside the City of Jackson, the Task Force supports Xcel's proposed route.

Additional Routes and Route Segments Considered

The Task Force and other interested persons identified several different routing alternatives in the City of Jackson that avoided some of the impacts associated with Xcel's proposed route. Another group of interested persons suggested a route alternative that passed through the south side of Jackson. All of these route alternatives are identified, discussed and evaluated in the next part of this Task Force report.

Identified Route Segments and Routing Alternatives. See Appendices D-1 that includes CATF Routes A, B, and C, D-2, D-3, D-4 and D-5.

During the January and February 2004, Task Force meetings, other route segments and routing options were identified for evaluation. Three of these options are small variations on Xcel's proposed line route and are identified in Appendix D-1 as CATF Route A, B and C.

Appendix D-2 identifies a route proposed by a member of the public at one of the Task Force meetings. This route was identified as the Dump Road Route.

The route identified in Appendix D-3 was identified by an interested group of citizens, and passes around and south of the City of Jackson.

Appendix D-4 identifies the existing 161 kV Alliant transmission line as a routing option.

Appendix D-5 the last routing option identified was recommended by the City of Jackson and is another variation on Xcel's proposed line through the City of Jackson. This option is known as the Farmers Cooperative Route.

D-1 Routing Alternatives

The D-1 routing alternative consists of three route segments. These route segments are variations of Xcel's proposed route through the City of Jackson and are identified as CATF Routes A, B and C and all pass through or adjacent to the Jackson Industrial Park.

CATF Route A passes through the Jackson Industrial Park along County Highway 38. Upon further review and evaluation of this route segment, the Task Force rejected it for further consideration because: a) turning lanes may be added to CH 38 in the future to accommodate increased traffic along this road; b) the addition of turning lanes may result in the need to relocate the line; and c) the transmission line would be very close to existing buildings in the industrial park

CATF Route B passes along the west and south side of the Jackson Industrial Park. This route segment alternative avoids most of the issues associated with going through the industrial park, but could impact good development land on the east side of CH 23. The CATF agreed that this routing option should be evaluated in the environmental assessment.

CATF Route C passes through the north side of the industrial park and along the south side of I-90. Transmission line design options would need to be evaluated because of this route's proximity to the existing airport facilities. Possible airport expansion plans may

further limit design options. The Task Force recommends that this route segment option be considered in the environmental assessment.

D-2 Routing Alternative

This alternative known as the "Dump Road" route was identified by a member of the public at the January 14, 2004, Task Force meeting. After further discussion and analysis, the Task Force recommended that this routing alternative be dismissed from further consideration because of: a) its proximity to some apartment buildings on the east side of Highway 71; b) its impact some good agricultural land that is highly suitable for development; and c) its proximity to Fort Belmont.

D-3 Routing Alternative

This routing option passes around and south of the City of Jackson. Several interested parties proposed this alternative to avoid the conflicts associated with Xcel's proposed route through the City of Jackson. There was also a lot of opposition to this route from the persons who lived and farmed along this route.

The Task Force voted to not consider this route for further evaluation because it: a) was five to six miles longer than any other route proposal; c) offered no advantages over the other routes; d) created a new right-of-way; and e) would significantly impact land owner and farmers. The City of Jackson also requested in a February 5, 2004, letter that this route option be withdrawn.

D-4 Routing Alternative

This routing alternative involves following the route of the existing Alliant 161 kV line extending from the Lakefield Junction Substation to the Fox Lake Substation. This existing corridor is about one and one-half miles north of I-90. The Alliant line is an older line built on wooden H frame structures that have created a number of problems for farmers who have to work around these structures.

The landowners would like to see the H-frame structures serving the Alliant line removed and replaced with single pole structures. The Task Force is aware that the Alliant line cannot be taken out of service for reliability reasons, and that Xcel has rejected this alternative for those reasons. The Task Force does not recommend taking the Alliant line out of service.

The Task Force does recommend that the EQB evaluate in the environmental assessment the alternative of installing single pole structures along a route parallel to the existing Alliant right-of-way. These structures should be capable of a double circuit configuration so they would be capable of supporting both the Alliant line and the new Xcel line. The

Task Force is also aware that for a period of time farmers may have to deal with two sets of structures on their property.

Also, the Task Force is aware that a new line parallel to the existing Alliant line must take into account the possible expansion of the Jackson Airport. This factor must be considered in the environmental assessment.

D-5 Routing Alternative

The Task Force at its February 4, 2004, meeting agreed to examine a new routing option based on the recommendation of the City of Jackson. This route is shown in Appendix D-5 and would pass through the property of the Farmers Cooperative Association. The City Council passed a resolution (No. 17-204) on February 2, 2004, supporting this routing option through the City of Jackson because:

“the preferred route [a] is preferred by AGCO, [b] removes the new line from the vicinity of the airport and thereby avoids potential air space and communications problems related to air traffic, [c] follows the established corridor of the existing railroad right-of-way rather than transecting prime development land in the SE1/4SE1/4 of said Section 18 and, therefore, is least likely to impede, restrict, or preclude economic development along the course of the New Line, development that is vital to the City, and [d] brings the New Line within close proximity to-and thereby facilitates economical interconnections with-the City’s substation.”

The Task Force recommends that this routing alternative be evaluated in the environmental assessment.

OTHER CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Lakefield Junction Substation Area. Xcel’s application requested some flexibility in the area of the Lakefield Junction Substation to accommodate future expansion plans to accommodate the Split Rock to Lakefield Junction proposed 345 kV transmission line, while minimizing land use impacts.

The Task Force recommends that Xcel be provided with routing flexibility in this area to consolidate existing and proposed transmission, and be permitted to re-route the Alliant line into the Lakefield Junction Substation and that this issue be considered in the environmental assessment.

Sherburn Substation Area. Landowners in the Sherburn Substation area have asked Xcel to consolidate transmission lines in this area. The Task Force supports this request

to double circuit the proposed 161 kV with existing transmission lines to clean up the area. Xcel has also proposed to do this in its application.

The Task Force recommends that this proposal be considered in the environmental assessment.

Other I-90 Routing Considerations. Several landowners along I-90 have requested that Xcel cross back over to the other side of the freeway to avoid being too close to their residences and farms. The Task Force recommends that these options be evaluated in the environmental assessment.

Buried Transmission Line Alternatives in the Vicinity of the Jackson Airport.

Undergrounding options near the Jackson Airport were also considered and evaluated to avoid conflict with the Jackson airport and industrial park. The Task Force is aware of the significant cost associated with buried transmission lines, approximately \$900 to \$1,100 per foot. The Task Force recommends that undergrounding costs and technology be evaluated in the environmental assessment for overhead route segments that may conflict with airport expansion plans.

III. Task Force Route Recommendations

The CATF has reviewed and examined the routing alternatives detailed in section II and recommends that the EQB chair include the following route alternatives in the Environmental Assessment:

1. Route option D-1 CATF Route B
2. Route option D-1 CATF Route C
3. Route option D-4, parallel to the Alliant Route without taking the existing line out of service-
4. Route option D-5 with flexibility to use the adjacent road(s) to give Xcel some flexibility.

The Task Force recommends that the following routes not be included in the scope of the Environmental Assessment:

1. Route option D-1 CATF Route A
2. Route option D-2 Dump Road Route
3. Route option D-3 Route around and south of the City of Jackson

The Task Force, based on information available to it, makes the following recommendations for EQB route approval:

- First Choice:** Route Option D-4, parallel to the existing Alliant line with single pole structures capable of double circuiting so that if possible the Alliant line could be moved to the new structures at the appropriate time.
- Second Choice:** Xcel's proposed route, using route option D-5 through the City of Jackson, with the flexibility to use adjacent roads along the east end of D-5 if warranted.
- Third Choice:** Xcel's proposed route, using route option D-1-C through the City of Jackson.
- Fourth Choice:** Xcel's proposed route, using route option D-1-B through the City of Jackson.

The Task Force understands that the EQB will compile a complete administrative record, which will include Xcel's application and the Environmental Assessment, and will consider the information in the record in making a final decision.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Citizen Advisory Task Force Decision and Scope of Participation...	Appendix A
Citizen Advisory Task Force Members	Appendix B
Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment Scoping Decision	Appendix C
Xcel Energy Proposed Route.....	Appendix D
Routing Alternatives through the Jackson Area.....	Appendix D-1
Old Dump Route Alternative	Appendix D-2
Route Alternative South of Jackson	Appendix D-3
Alliant Route	Appendix D-4
Farmers Cooperative Route	Appendix D-5

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

**In the Matter of A Pending Application
By Xcel Energy For A Route Permit For
A New 161 kV High Voltage
Transmission Line Between Lakefield
Junction And Fox Lake Substation In
Southwest Minnesota.**

**CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE
DECISION AND SCOPE OF
PARTICIPATION**

The above-entitled matter, a pending application for a route permit for a new 161 kV transmission line, approximately 24 miles long, between Lakefield Junction and Fox Lake substations in Southwestern Minnesota, came before the Chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB) for a decision on the need for a Citizen Advisory Task Force regarding the expected High Voltage Transmission Line (HVTL) application.

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission recently issued a Certificate of Need to Xcel Energy for a new 161 kV High Voltage Transmission Line between the existing Lakefield Junction Substation and the existing Fox Lake substation in southwest Minnesota (PUC Docket E-002/CN-01-1958); and

WHEREAS, an application for a routing permit for this new line is expected to be filed with the MEQB sometime in June 2003; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes § 116C.59, and Minnesota Rules Chapter 4400.1600, allow the Chair to appoint a Citizens Advisory Task Force as early in the process as possible; and

WHEREAS, The MEQB staff attended a public meeting in the local area, received comments, and assembled their findings and recommendations into a May 9, 2003, memorandum to the Chair; and

WHEREAS, a number of issues regarding location of the proposed line have been identified.

THEREFORE, having reviewed this information, the Chair makes the following determination with regard to the need for, and charge to a Citizen Advisory Task Force relating to this matter.

CITIZEN ADVISORY TASK FORCE AUTHORIZATION

The Chair finds that there are sufficient issues surrounding the possible routing of this new HVTL to warrant the input and advice of a Citizens Advisory Task Force. The membership of this group will be determined according to the requirements set out in Minn. Stat § 116C.59 and as follows.

Members will be solicited from the following groups:

- The Southwest Regional Development Commission
- The Region Nine Development Commission
- The City of Jackson
- The City of Sherburn
- Jackson County
- Martin County
- A Town Board member from either Manyaska or Jay Township in Martin County
- A Town Board member from Hunter, Des Moines, or Wisconsin Township in Jackson County
- The City of Lakefield
- Two landowners from along the proposed routes

The Chair further finds that it is prudent to set the charge to the Task Force as follows:

The charge to the Task Force shall be to identify additional routes, and particular impacts to be evaluated in the environmental review process. In particular the Task Force should consider whether routes along Town Roads such as 810th street and 830th street should be included in the review, and whether consideration of routes crossing the Des Moines River at Highway 16 should be considered. The Task Force should also consider how the line could be routed along any route corridors identified by Xcel Energy, including an examination of routing issues near the City of Jackson Airport. The Task Force should express a preference for a specific route if it has one. The Task Force should complete its review and report to the Board no later than 60 days after the date of acceptance of a completed application.

The MEQB staff is directed to compile a list of names for possible appointment to the Citizen Advisory Task Force for the Chair's consideration.

Signed this ____ day of _____, 2003

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

Robert A. Schroeder
Chair

Citizen Advisory Task Force Members Lakefield/Fox Lake

Craig Rubis, Chairperson
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Preliminary Draft

STATE OF MINNESOTA

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

**In the Matter of Xcel Energy's
Application for a Route Permit for a 161
kV High Voltage Transmission Line in
Jackson and Martin Counties, Minnesota**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING DECISION
Docket #03-64-TR-XCEL
February -----, 2004**

The above-entitled matter came before the Chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EBB) for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared on the proposed Xcel Energy Lakefield Junction-Fox Lake 161 kV Transmission Line project. The EQB held a public meeting on December 15, 2003, to discuss the project with the public and to solicit input into the scope of the EA to be prepared. The public was given until February 10, 2004 to submit written comments regarding the scope of the EA. Having reviewed the comments submitted and consulted with EQB staff, I hereby make the following Scoping Order. The EA shall address the following issues.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

In addition to the route proposed by Xcel Energy, the EA shall address the following alternative route segments suggested by citizen groups:

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

IMPACTS TO BE EVALUATED

The Environmental Assessment on the Lakefield Junction-Fox Lake 161 kV Transmission Line project will address and provide information on the following matters:

A. GENERAL TRANSMISSION LINE IMPACTS TO BE ANALYZED

1. Purpose of the Transmission Line.
2. Summary of major impacts of the selected route segments on human settlement patterns
3. Summary of major impacts of the selected segments on local social and economic factors
4. Summary of major route impacts on local archaeological and historic resources
5. Summary of major route impacts on the environment, rare and unique natural resources

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

B. ROUTE SELECTION

1. The processes used to identify and evaluate the route segments
2. An analysis of the technical and economic feasibility of each alternative route segment considered.
3. List of any alternative route segments considered by the Applicant and discussion of why the final route segments were chosen.
4. Discussion of any mitigative measures that could be reasonably implemented to eliminate or minimize any adverse impacts for each route segment of the proposed project.
5. Property acquisition procedures for the land where the transmission line may be routed

C. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

1. Threatened and endangered species and species of concern along the route segments
2. The potential for disruption of critical habitat along the route segments
3. The location of utility line structures and potential impacts on wetlands

D. CULTURAL RESOURCES

1. The impacts of proposed route segments on any pre-existing cultural resources

E. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

1. The potential for soil erosion at the transmission line structure sites
2. The potential for loss of prime farmland due to transmission line structures.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

F. HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. The use, location, size, and potential configuration EMF field effects of high voltage transmission lines for the proposed project
2. Current regulatory status of public health risks related to electric and magnetic fields.
3. Emergency preparedness plans for disruption of the transmission line
4. Potential for radio, television and cell phone interference from transmission lines.

G. LAND

1. Potential property value changes on residential and commercial parcels
2. Cost-benefit of under grounding of transmission lines in residential and commercial areas.
3. Zoning requirements and project compatibility with local land use planning
4. Transmission line setbacks required from highways and residential areas
5. The effects of the new transmission line on existing land uses

H. NOISE

1. Noise associated with construction of the transmission line
2. Noise associated with operation of the transmission line

I. VISUAL IMPACTS AND AESTHETICS

1. Line-of-sight issues and visual impact of the transmission line and related structures

J. SOCIOECONOMICS

1. Construction, operation, and closure effects upon the local economy (jobs, property taxes, change in property values, residential turnover rates)

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE EIS

The EQB will not, as part of this environmental review, consider whether a different size or different type of transmission line should be built instead. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) order establishes the transmission line options that Xcel Energy must build to facilitate wind energy development in southwestern . Nor will the EQB consider the no-build option.

IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

The EA will include a list of permits that will be required for the applicant to construct this project.

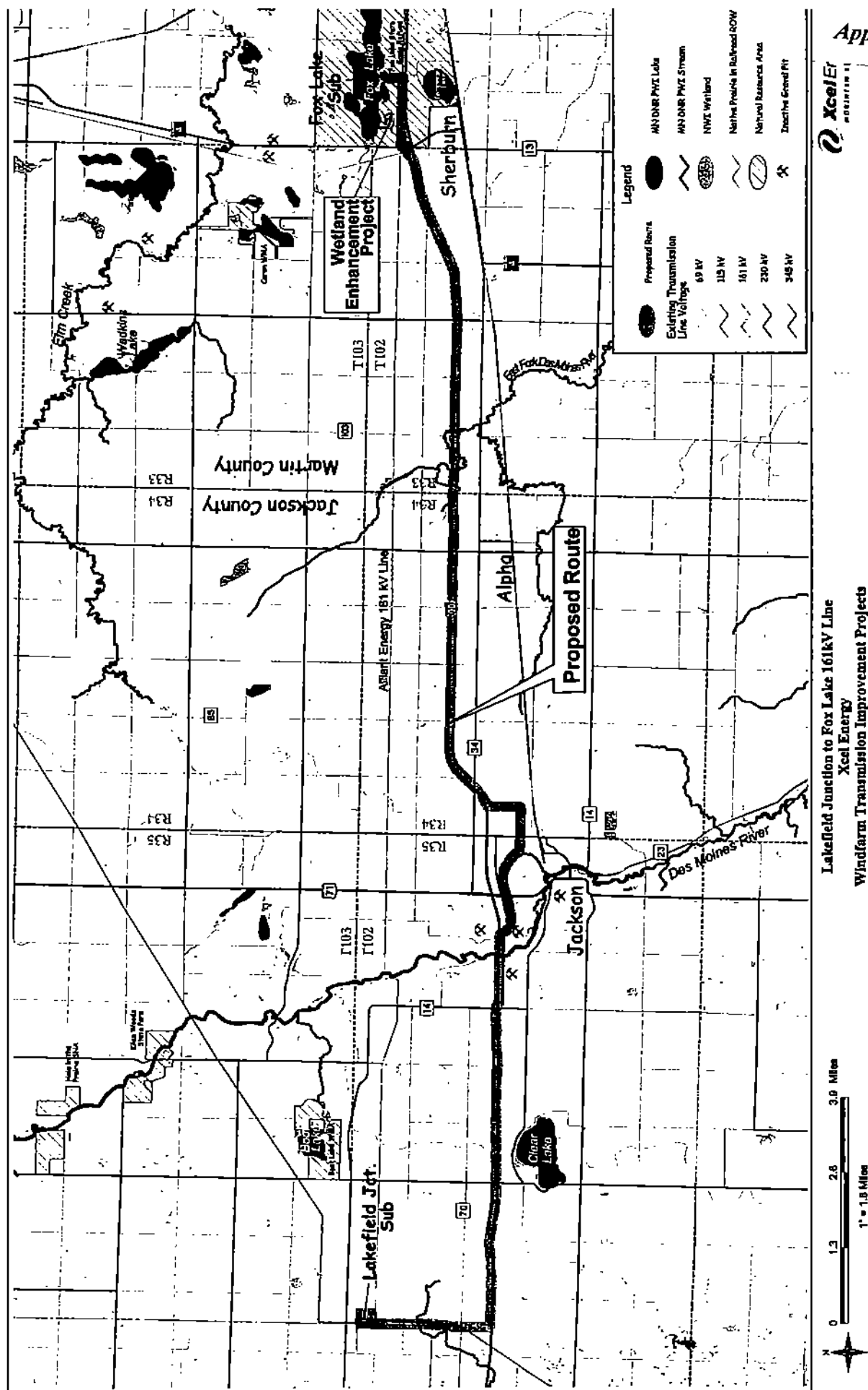
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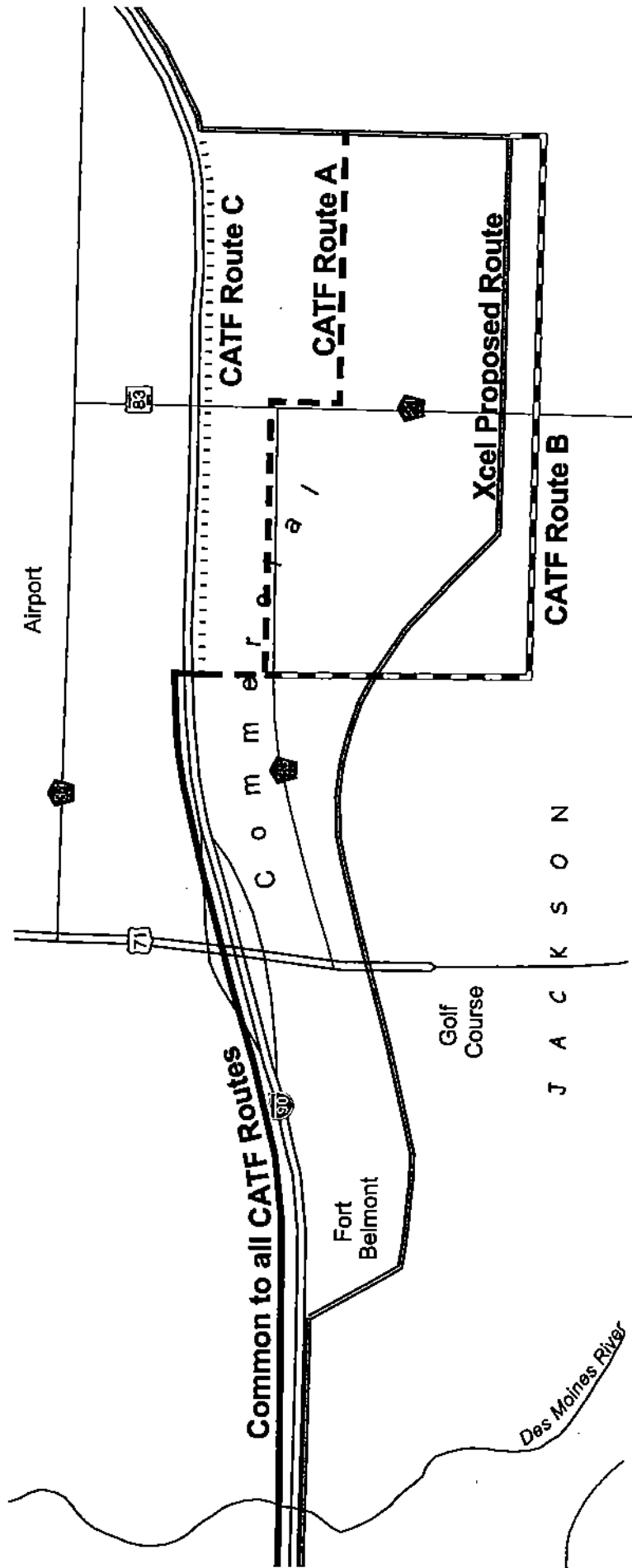
The EA will be completed by _____

Signed this ____ day of _____, 2004

STATE OF MINNESOTA
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

Robert A. Schroeder, Chair





Xcel Energy Proposal

— Dump Road

— I-90 South Side

— I-90 North Side, then through Industrial Park

..... Not Viable Due to Existing Runway Restrictions

— Possible County Road 38 Route Segment

See attached notes
regarding runway
restrictions

Dashed
Red/Orange:
Likely change to
Xcel route to stay
on property lines

500 1000 1500 Feet



Lakefield Jct. to For
Potential R
Jacksr

---161 kv/69 kv proposed alternate route---

